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ETHNIC PECULIARITIES OF CULTURE AS A TOOL FOR BUILDING URBAN IDENTITY

Abstract: *Preservation of the ethno-cultural peculiarities of indigenous peoples is of particular importance in the self-identification of an individual. A high level of urban identity formation can be achieved by creating environmental conditions that take into account national characteristics. D.M. Semenova (2015) in her study notes that the formation of identity in small cities of Russia at present can be divided conditionally into two directions: cities “with history” and “without history” – new cities created on the basis of an industrial enterprise. However, both directions do not fully take into account the national specifics. The introduction of ethnic specifics and interpretations on the themes of national art in the visual environment of the city is necessary. Expressed in the image of the city, the meanings, ideas, values, can influence the behavior of people, form an attitude towards the city and motivation for their own identification and the appearance of a sense of belonging to their people. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to the decent development of the city’s visual and communication image, taking into account ethnic features. The alignment policy of the times of the Soviet Union led the indigenous peoples of Russia to an identity crisis that affected the architecture of cities. The capital of Khakassia – Abakan – is now a city with a universal Soviet heritage. Ethnic groups are deprived of places of their culture “presentation” in the urban environment. The loss of identity does not promote tolerant interethnic relations in the city. Modern representation of the human environment requires the design of the architectural environment of the city, taking into account ethnic visual features.*

Keywords: *urban identity, ethnic identity, identity crisis, ethnicity.*

Introduction

Identification helps to establish deep emotional connection with another person or a group of people, to form civilized socio-economic relations among different ethnic groups living in the same territory. Thus, features and character peculiarities, norms, values, and samples can be adopted.

Ethnic identity is the most ancient and stable form of structuring the world (Saretidinova, 2015). The native language, culture, traditions, customs, rituals, and peculiarities of the ethnocultural contact environment are distinguished as the main factors influencing the formation of ethnicity. The development of ethnic identity is a necessary condition for the normal life of a person.

Urban identity is part of the social individual identity along with the age, gender, and ethnic identity. It is formed through the interaction of a person with the urban environment. Language and other symbols of everyday interaction, including visual elements of the urban environment, become the main factors influencing the identity process, since communication is the key criterion for identification.

The formation of a person’s identity goes in the context of the city’s identity, which is its unique appearance and features. Identity can be formed depending on the potential of the city, which, in turn, depends on many factors. As an example, we consider the research by D.M. Semenova. She emphasizes several areas of development of the city’s identity. She says that urban identity is a collection of symbols and myths that are the intersection of various discursive

spaces of the city and are rooted in the city's consciousness. Relying on Semenova's research, we can conditionally divide the city into two large groups: cities with "history" and cities "without history." Formation of identity in these cities is mainly within the framework of cultural and historical discursive space.

According to Semenova's research, the construction of identity in cities "with history" follows four key directions: the first direction is associated with the dominance in the discourse of a specific historical figure associated with the city. For example, Uglich is the place of Tsarevich Dmitry's death, Pereslavl-Zalessky is Alexander Nevsky's birthplace, Rostov is the Sergius of Radonezh birthplace. The second direction is carried out through the emphasis on the famous architectural structures located in the city: Vyborg is Vyborg Castle; Rostov is Rostov Kremlin. The third direction is the use of specific characters associated with the history, mythology or geographical city's features: Myshkin is a place where, presumably, the mouse saved the prince from death. The fourth direction is informal capital. For example, Gus-Khrustalny is the capital of crystal. But the most effective way of constructing the urban identity of a small city goes through the complex use of symbols of various discourses (Semenova, 2015).

Analyzing the second group of small towns conventionally called "without history," we single out cities that were formed relatively recently: either in the Soviet period or a little earlier. The formation of urban identity there is much more difficult, because there are no long history of the city and a limited symbols set for the design of urban identity. The formation of identity in these cities proceeds in two ways: through association with the profession and/or industrial enterprise (Chernogorsk is the city of coal miners) and with the artificial creation of a myth or mythological symbol. For example, Veliky Ustyug is the hometown of Father Frost.

All these directions do not take into account the national specifics. The use of the myths of individual peoples and nationalities is not intended, even in the case of an artificially created myth or mythological character. This fact cannot be ignored, since more than 190 nationalities live in Russia. Any city is a complex multinational structure with its own ethnic processes.

A high level of identity formation can be achieved by creating environmental conditions that consider the national peculiarities of the peoples' culture. The introduction of ethnic specifics and interpretations on the themes of national art in the visual environment of the city is necessary. Meanings, ideas, values, expressed in the image of the city, can influence the behavior of people, form an attitude towards the city, motivation for personal identification and the appearance of a sense of belonging to their people. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to the decent development of the city's visual and communication image, considering ethnic features. In view of this, the image of the territory should be a reflection of the best features of the mentality and traditions of the population of the territory, fulfill a kind of cultural and ideological function, uniting the population to perform common tasks.

Identity of Abakan

Social transformations in Russian society in the 1990s were accompanied by a breakdown of the existing social institutions and led to a change in the traditional value system. The state-civic identity was destroyed after the collapse of the Soviet Union and expansive modernization. The result of these processes is the identity crisis, manifested in the search for new grounds for identification. The consequence of these processes was the growing importance of ethnic identity. Moreover, at the group level, ethnic identity ensured political mobilization, acting as a means of achieving group interests.

Khakassia is a land with a long and rich history. One of the ancient cultural centers of Eurasia was located here for several millennia, from the Bronze Age to the Mongolian time. Today, its legacy is represented by grandiose grave fields of dozens, and sometimes hundreds of burial mounds that can be seen everywhere. Due to the past of Khakassia has become an inalienable and visible part of the present. The study of ethnoecological traditions and ecological cults is an important stage in the analysis of culture to identify the basis for environmental design.

The basis of the worldview of the Khakas is the realization of the life-giving power of Nature. The Khakas believe that it is necessary to live in harmony with Nature and to give humanity a chance to survive and overcome the ecological crisis. This is quite clearly reflected in the national symbols, traditions, planning features of ancient settlements.

Floral ornaments on clothing and household items (Fig.1), the competent use of natural materials during construction, the cult of nature in rites and a careful attitude towards are evidence of the veneration of the life-giving force of Nature.



Figure 1. National floral ornaments

The traditional period of the Khakassia architecture development is characterized by national dwellings, residential and public objects in Russian construction technology. The ideas of the national culture image, reflected in the processing of the historical national heritage, have been traced since the beginning of Soviet power establishments in architecture. However, from 1917 to 1932 there were no manifestations of national themes in the architecture of Khakassia. The same can be said about modern construction and landscaping.

During neoclassicism, the first attempt to give the national identity to the architecture was made. In the 1940-1950s in Abakan a house of specialists, which remained the only example of the national themes' manifestation in the architecture of the Khakass autonomy for a long time, was built (Fig. 2). The dwelling house, built in neoclassical forms, included national motifs of ornaments from the Khakass folk art (Lemytskaya, 2014).



Figure 2. House of specialists in Abakan. Examination drawing. Main façade

Since the 1970s, the search for a national style has been actively manifested in the architecture of Khakassia. The manifestation of national themes in the architecture of buildings was not so expressive and was solved by methods of art synthesis. The motifs of the Khakass national art and ornament were used only in some elements and decorative design of the facades (Fig. 3). The search for national character did not appear in the voluminous-spatial composition of buildings.



Figure 3. Khakas National Puppet Theater “Skazka”, Abakan

The artistic potential, the national specifics and the possibilities of stylistic interpretations on the themes of the Khakass national art by the architects were realized in isolated cases and did not receive extensive, bold mastery and development in the formation of the architectural environment of Abakan. This probably indicates the overwhelming predominance of the features of Soviet architecture in the development of the city of the period under consideration, the lack of attention and the obvious interest on the part of the authorities towards the possibility or necessity of manifesting national themes in the architecture of Abakan. But those single manifestations of identity are valued by the residents and can be the starting point for introducing national specifics into the urban environment (Lemytskaya, 2012)

Analysis of the urban environment

We analyzed the center of Abakan as an area equidistant from the periphery to determine the further development of urban identity. In addition, the center of the city is a historically developed territory, with its steady processes, which are quite easy to follow.

During the analysis, we noted such public places as: public spaces, infrastructure objects, entertainment facilities, shops and catering points, sports facilities and public transport stops. The data were obtained with the help of field observations, photographic fixation and data analysis of the open maps of Strava and 2GIS. There is the obtained scheme (Fig. 4). The places that attract people have been revealed. We can determine the main direction of pedestrian activities (Fig.5) based on the data obtained, as well as the places of the territory functions stagnation. This analysis helped to determine the project area, which in the future should be filled with elements of architecture and objects for improvement, using ethnic stylistics.

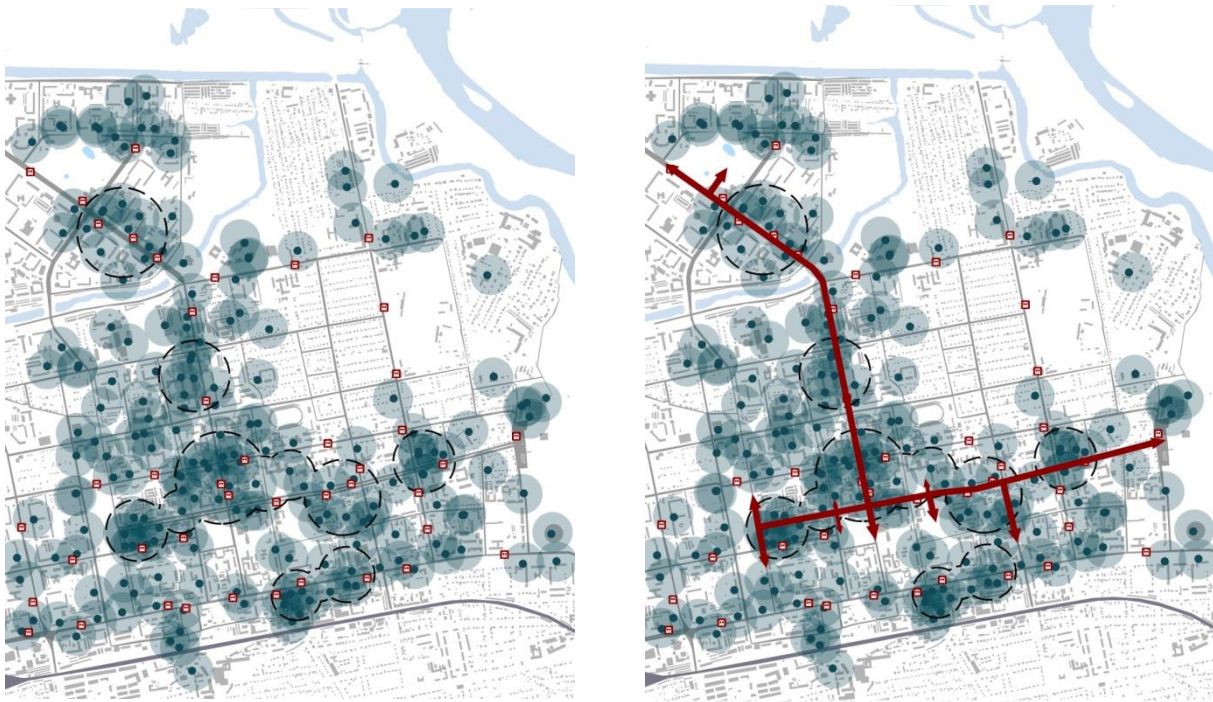


Figure 4, 5. Schemes of the city center indicating public places

Conclusion

Different nations living in the same territory are connected with each other by the urban environment. In the process of interaction, they acquire communication skills and establish strong international relations. Preservation of unique ethnic features of the territory, embodied in the basic elements of architecture and city improvement, can help national minorities with identification and self-determination, and contribute to the creation of an identical image of the city and the development of its tourist appeal. Thus, this research should be resulted into the creation of an identical city appearance concept by forming individual architectural canons and organizing developed public spaces using unique ethnic peculiarities of the region.

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